# Milwaukee 'Hams' Win Their Way Back on Air

## Radio Amateurs, Silenced by War, Now Perfecting Neat Emergency Service

By RICHARD K. BELLAMY
Of The Journal Staff

You can't keep a good "ham" down.

Silenced by Pearl Harbor, Milwaukee's radio amateurs ("hams" is their perennial nickname) have won their way back to the air and are now operating the neatest and most efficient emergency communications service you could ever hope to see. They started from scratch and built the whole thing themselves.

The all but finished product comprises a network of 19 fixed and 10 mobile radio stations covering Milwaukee county. The 94 specially licensed operators, who are the personnel, get together on the air every Wednesday night and drill themselves to handle any kind of situation that might arise here, in war or peace, involving a disruption of the telephone system or the fire and police two way radio setup.

Several similar units already have proved the worth of the service—as in Cleveland, Ohio, when a recent gas explosion and fire caused a telephone line jam and overtaxed the regular police and fire communications. The authorities were able to use the amateurs' radio stations to send many a vital message, direct rescue work, control traffic and otherwise help in handling a terrible disaster.

A Milwaukee Journal reporter got an eyeful of the Milwaukee system in operation during a Wednesday night drill. His mentor was Emil R. Felber, jr., 1625 N. 18th st., who is many things besides a mail carrier. He is a moving spirit in the 25 year old Milwaukee Radio Amateurs' club; he is section communications manager of the American Radio Relay league, and he is the operator of Fixed Unit 22 of the amateurs' new network, which holds the call letters WMFI from the federal communications commission and is officially called the war emergency radio service (WERS).

### Jack Showed the Man

The personally conducted Felber tour began about 8:30 p. m. at Unit 10, which is housed in the fire station of a north side suburb. There at the controls this drill night was Jack Doyle, 4331 N. Wildwood av., an automobile dealer by day and a "ham" from way back by night.

"Jack, show the man how we boys of WMFI operate," suggested Felber. "Tell 'em we want to meet one of the mobile units. I think No. 27 has the handie talkie outfit tonight."

Doyle flipped a key on the sending-receiving set in front of him.

"Unit 10 to Unit 22," he droned into a hand microphone. "Unit 10 to Unit 22. Official party leaving Unit 10 shortly, wants to meet mobile Unit 27 at N. 12th and W. Hadley sts., the southwest corner, in 15 minutes." He repeated the message.

Then he turned the key to receive the reply. In a few seconds he heard from Unit 22, which had been designated the "key control" unit for the night and which cleared all messages sent by the various units to one another.

"Unit 22 to Unit 10," said the voice of 22, "Unit 22 to Unit 10. Message received. Wilco."

### Must Get It Direct

Shortly the man at Unit 22 was heard relaying the message to Mobile Unit 27, which acknowledged it. The operator of 27 had been listening to Doyle's original message anyway, but the rules of operation require that he get it direct from the "key control" station. Without such rigid procedure, Felber pointed out, the very goal of the network—sure, efficient communication—would be jeopardized by confusion among the operators.

Driving to meet Unit 27 in the stipulated 15 minutes, Felber explained the beauty of the WERS system.

"Each unit of WMFI," said Felber, "includes a built-in receiver tuned to WPDK, the police-fire-sheriff radio station. Through close contact between one of our units and WPDK, the two systems can be co-ordinated if it proves desirable. On the other hand, they can be operated with complete independence, with our own units talking back and forth to each other directly, without jamming up the WPDK traffic.

"In everyday conditions the regular police and fire setup is perfectly adequate, since with two way radio and the telephone any average occurrence can be handled. It is for major emergencies that the WERS was created—big fires, explosions, even bombings, when the telephone lines get so jammed the authorities are unable to depend on them, and when the job of meeting the emergency is simply too big for a central radio direction, like WPDK, to handle.

### Right on the Nose

As Felber's car proceeded south on N. 12th st., another car swung in front of it from a side street and pulled to the curb at the southwest corner of 12th and Hadley.

"On the nose," said Felber casually, looking at his watch. "There's No. 27 waiting for us. It's now a few seconds short of 15 minutes. Pretend it's an ambulance we're meeting, and you see how we could be a help in a matter of life or death communications."

Impressed, the reporter alighted and met the operator of 27, Thaddeus Hien, of 1361 W. Windlake, a radio repairman by occupation.

Hien was driving and also operating the two way radio clamped onto the car door beside him. With him was Irving Jackson, 2133 E. Bennett av., a member of the police force when he is not "hamming." Jackson's duty was to keep the written log of messages received and sent by Station 27. All stations, fixed and mobile, operate more easily with an operator and a logger; and when a unit is designated as "key control" it is virtually impossible for a man to operate without a logger to keep the record straight on the flood of messages.

### Smooth as Silk

Now Hien and Jackson proudly produced a "handie talkie," just like the one the paratroopers use. In the WERS network it is mobile unit No. 24, and it sends and receives just like the car radios or the fixed stations. It weighs only six and one-half pounds and, as the reporter soon found, is hardly more trouble to operate than a telephone. Hien put it together at home from parts scraped together here and there. With a power input of only .02 watts, tiny unit No. 24 has been heard eight miles away by a far south side unit.

"The handie talkie," the reporter was told, "can be made the key control station just like the other units, if a situation had to be handled by a man on foot and it was desirable he should be in charge of directing the other units."

Hien then drove away with mobile unit No. 27. Standing on the sidewalk, Jackson put the handie talkie to his ear and with the permission of "key control" No. 22 called No. 27, directed Hien to go to another place. Hien's voice came in, acknowledging the message. When he reached the new point he called in and Jackson summoned him to return. Hien was back in a couple of minutes. The smoothness of the operation gave the reporter nothing less than a kick. He could visualize police officers, military personnel, civil air patrol leaders and Red Cross directors making use of the system in the emergency which it is hoped never will arise.

The tour ended at another fixed unit, No. 22 (for security reasons the sites of the 19 fixed stations are not being divulged here), which had been "key control" all evening. No. 22 is Felber's own unit. Sitting before it were Charles Meyers, 3135 N. 5th st., who had taken over so Felber could make his tour, and Norman Barnes, 2512 N. 61st st., president of the radio amateurs' club here.

The story of Felber's unit is the story of all 29, (actually now only 28, since one fixed unit in the southern part of the county has not yet found suitable quarters). Felber's two way radio set, with its neat cabinet, was put together from scratch. New equipment was practically impossible to get, for war reasons. No priority materials were used. Felber fell back on the set he used before his amateur station, W9RH, was barred from the air by Pearl Harbor. With that and a piece picked up here and there, a bit of salvage from wornout equipment, a trade with another amateur, Felber built unit No. 22. It was the same way with the other fixed units and the 10 units in automobiles. Home work—as "hams" have always loved it.

The club members worked together, as always. One member was able to get some cast-off metal for bases from the war plant where he worked. Another, Tommy Gettelman of Elm Grove, donated the lumber for the cabinets, which the members finished up at Shorewood's Opportunity school.

It took more than two years to finish the job of unit construction. But with what typical Miwaukee thoroughness! The equipment and even the cabinet of each fixed unit is exactly alike. There are other WERS networks, as in New York, Chicago, Cleveland, San Francisco, but none of them has achieved such uniformity against odds.

### Had to Cut Red Tape

Getting the unit into operation also involved crashing through a lot of governmental red tape, but eventually WERS was authorized by the FCC as an arm of civilian defense. That the network is not to be looked upon as so many amateurs at play is hinted by the fact that the signature of Police Chief Joseph T. Kluchesky appeared on the local group's application to the FCC.

Herb Wareing, chief radio engineer of the Milwaukee police department and a veteran "ham," is radio aide for the county. Under the WERS setup he is the man who "alerts" the 94 men who operate the 29 stations. He has done it in practice, and either he or his assistant aide, Norman Barnes, would do it in emergency. To participate in WERS one must pass FCC tests and be given a license as a radiotelephone operator. Of the 94 licensed operators here, about 80% are former amateur station operators.

"We do not look upon the present system as complete," said Wareing. "We hope to expand well beyond 29 stations, which is only a barely necessary number. We are on the lookout for more trained personnel to help build and operate new units, and our group will give the training. If interested, just drop around to one of the regular meetings of the Milwaukee Radio Amateurs club Thursday nights at the public museum."

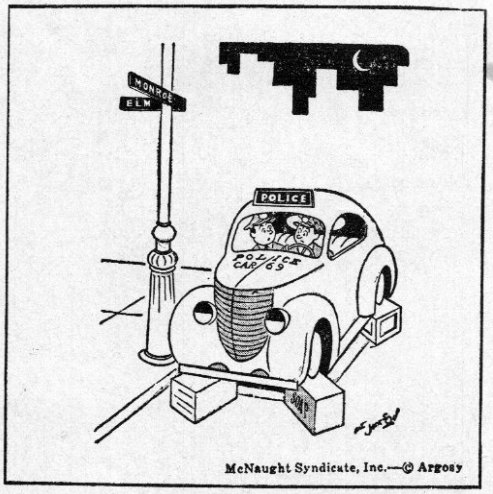
The WMFI network operates on the ultrahigh frequency of 112 megacycles. Member units have been heard as far away as Homewood, Ill.

## Chester the Pup

By GEORGE O'HALLORAN

Our town has a swell USO for the servicemen; in fact, we think it's one of the best. There's always plenty for the boys to eat, and although cigarets are harder to find than the seams on a soap bubble, our USO always has a bundle of them for the guys in uniform. When there's entertainment it's always the best with stars like Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Eddie Cantor. So yesterday you could have knocked Drizzle-Puss down with a whisp of smoke when he got a letter from the director of the USO asking him if he'd

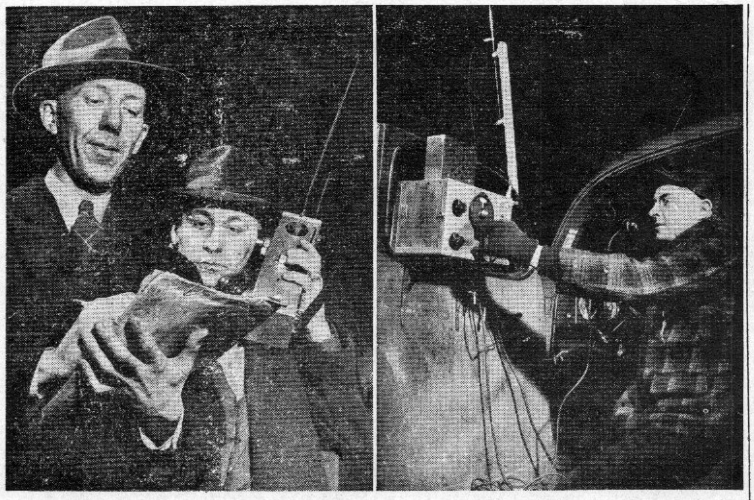
come over and perform some of his magic tricks for the boys. Baby, that director is going to be one sad sack when he finds out what he's getting. Drizzle-Puss' tricks all start out like a million dollars in war bonds and end up like a dime's worth of Japanese yen. The only trick he knows all the way through is the one where he breaks a guy's watch and shoves it in a gun and when he pulls the trigger, out comes a flag. But even that goes wrong half the time and he just blows holes in the wall.




McNaught Syndicate, Inc.—© Argosy

"Calling Car 69: Be on alert for tire thieves operating in vicinity of Elm and Monroe!"

Emil R. Felber, jr. (left), of 1625 N. 18th st. operates Unit 22 of Milwaukee county's new emergency radio communications system. Keeping the log for him is Norman Barnes, 2512 N. 61st st., president of the Milwaukee Radio Amateurs' club. —Journal Staff



Pride of the local emergency network is a "handie talkie" unit (left), shown being operated by Irving Jackson, 2133 E. Bennett av., while Charles Meyers, 3135 N. 5th st., writes in the log book. At the right, Thaddeus Hien, 1361 W. Windlake av., broadcasts a message from Mobile Unit 27 in his automobile. Hien made the handie talkie. —Journal Staff

### HOLD EVERYTHING

"How about a furlough? This card says I gotta return an overdue library book!"

## Whamdoodles

Along with its other qualities, the Russian soldier believes vodka will cure anything, thus combining the salient features of iodine, the sulfa drugs and a blow torch.

* * *

But, at $25,000 a year, could a congressman still get that true tremolo in the voice while discussing the tribulations of the poor?

* * *

Hitler, who thundered for years concerning the Red menace, is now in a position to point in any easterly direction and crack, "See what I mean?"

* * *

With all hands rubbing, the unsightly Belgian bulge has been massaged away. In the meantime this Berlin bicep of Joe Stalin's is a beaut.

* * *

With farmhands off to the great wars, and herds being sold, there may be nothing to put in barns but summer actors.

H. V. WADE.

## Social Situations

**The Situation:** You would like to share parts of your husband's letters from overseas with his parents, but not all of the letters, because some parts were written for you alone.

**Wrong Way:** Decide to keep the letters entirely to yourself.

**Right Way:** If they are with you, read aloud the parts you want them to hear and if they are at a distance, copy the parts of your husband's letters you want his parents to share.

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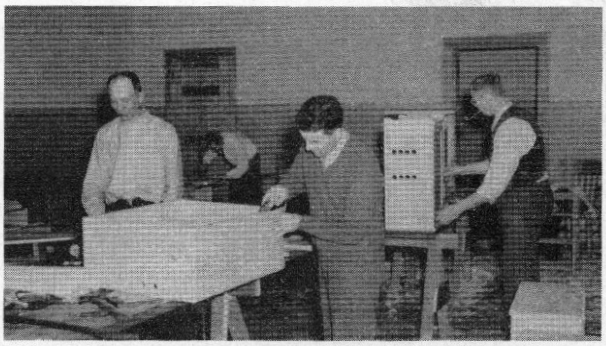
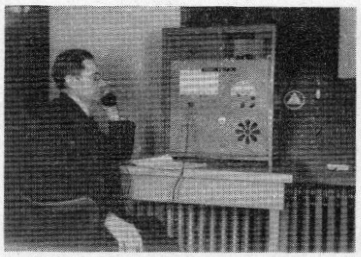
ARTICLE FROM GREEN SHEET OF THURS. FEB. 1, 1945

MILWAUKEE RADIO AMATEURS CLUB.
T.R.G.

"CONSTRUCTION"

MEYER - GVL
SCARVACI - GIL
BARNES - CDY





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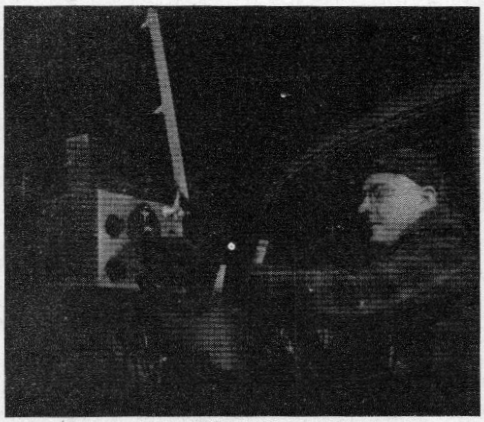
OPERATOR #9 ERV. KREIS - HRM

FELBER - RM  BARNES - CDY



HEIN - ACM

MEYER - GVL  JACKSON

MAY 1945

OLD → MEETING ROOMS → NEW

← RADIO AIDE WAERING - NY, DON SEIBEL - ex ESO
H. H. DEVENDORF (SEC'Y. W.E.R.S.) KREIS - HRM.

← MAY 25, 1945 ↙

"PROSIT!" FROM 1942 ?
GETTELMAN - IZO, WOLLAEGER - ANA, HANDY - ARRL HDQTRS.

"THE STAKES WERE HIGH!"
MEYER - GVL, STROMBERG - DC, SCARVACI - GIL, ZANDER - DIJ